

# Thinking Skill and Personal Capabilities Rationale

## Why? The rationale for including Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

The curriculum emphasises the development of Cross-Curricular Skills and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities for lifelong learning and contributing effectively to society. These Whole Curriculum Skills and Capabilities are embedded in each Key Stage. Pupils should have opportunities to acquire, develop and demonstrate these skills in all areas of the curriculum.

Thinking skills of Managing Information, Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making, and Being Creative are tools that help children go beyond the acquisition of knowledge to:

- deepen their understanding and apply ideas;
- generate new possibilities;
- make decisions; and
- plan, monitor and evaluate their progress.

Personal and interpersonal skills and capabilities underpin success in all aspects of life. Children's self-esteem and self confidence should be fostered explicitly along with their ability to manage their own emotions, to interact effectively with others and eventually to regulate and enhance their own learning.

Through opportunities to engage in active learning contexts across all areas of the curriculum, the intention is to develop children's personal and interpersonal learning skills, capabilities and dispositions, and their ability to think both creatively and critically.

Developing skills and capabilities enable pupils to learn how to learn. Skills and capabilities:

- engage pupils in active learning;
- highlight the processes of learning, not just the products;
- provide a range of criteria that pupils can use to evaluate their learning progress.

Changing patterns of employment affect young people's future careers. To manage these changes, young people need to leave education equipped with the skills to adapt and continue their lifelong learning.

The Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Framework is informed by research into how we learn. It gives teachers a structure to help pupils to think more skilfully.

Including the Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities within the Northern Ireland Curriculum is acknowledged in the over-arching rationale:

A detailed longitudinal study of learners' perceptions about the Northern Ireland Curriculum indicated that young people are motivated by learning that is related to their lives now and in the future. They welcome authentic opportunities to explore real life problems; to think through their own responses; to develop skills; to make meaningful connections across subjects; and to apply and transfer knowledge and understanding from one situation to another and particularly into the world of work.\*

\*Key finding from The Northern Ireland Pupil Cohort Study 1996–2003, NFER Rationale and Detail Document, CCEA (2007)